

# Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Family and Children Services

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) has two primary goals:  
To protect children and strengthen families and make them more self-sufficient.

DFCS was restructured in 2004 to meet those goals more effectively. At the state level, the division now has an Office of Child Protection to oversee activities related to child safety and protection. The Office of Adoptions, formerly a stand-alone office in DHR, has been added to the Child Protection office to consolidate services to children. The Office of Family Independence oversees TANF and other self-sufficiency and family support activities. The division has almost 8,000 staff members. Of these more than 7,700 work in the county offices.

The division budget for FY 2004 was over \$1 billion, including \$456 million in state funds.

## Child protection

The Office of Child Protection is state-administered and county-supervised. County directors supervise child protection supervisors and casework staff.

Caseworkers, located in 159 county DFCS offices, provide a wide variety of social services including **protective services** to abused and neglected children and their families. They provide assessment, placement and treatment services for children in **foster care**. Caseworkers work to find permanent homes for children through **adoption**. A **Rapid Response Team**, created in April 2004, is available to assist those counties which have fast-growing caseloads.

In FY 2003

Child Protective Services workers investigated 66,984 reports of child maltreatment.

14,481 children were in the legal custody of DFCS each month. Slightly more than one-half of them (7,905) were placed in family foster care homes. Medically fragile children and children with special needs were in institutional and specialized placements.

DFCS implemented a level of care system for foster care children on March 1, 2004. This system provides six levels of therapeutic residential treatment based on a thorough assessment of the needs of the child. They range from specialized foster care to intensive residential treatment.

In FY 2003, 982 children were placed in adoptive homes.

By December 31, 2004, all caseworkers and supervisors are required to be Certified. New staff must undergo an initial assessment, complete an eight-week Child Protection Training Academy program and complete two months of work under the direction of a mentor. To retain certification, staff must take 20 hours of continuing education annually.

The DFCS strategic reorganization plan also creates a career path for child protection caseworkers and child protection supervisors. This is needed to reduce turnover and to develop a stable, experienced workforce.

### **Family Independence**

This office manages the activities of caseworkers in county departments. Twelve regional managers and regional program staff supervise case managers and eligibility staff. Family Independence case managers take applications and certify families for **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, Medicaid and childcare.**

In FY 2003

TANF benefits totaled more than \$156 million. A monthly average of 138,624 Georgians received TANF. Of these, 76 percent were children; the others were their adult caregivers. The average monthly benefit was \$225.

An average of 33,584 TANF recipients received employment services every month. 345,489 children and 143,500 adults were certified for participation in the Medicaid program.

Food stamp benefits worth \$772 million were issued. About 760,076 low-income people received food stamps monthly. Benefits averaged \$85 a month per household.

61,992 children were in subsidized childcare each month, at a cost of \$182 million. Subsidized childcare allows low-income families to pay for day care on a sliding fee scale so they can work or train for employment.

Twenty community action agencies and four local governments received about \$16.3 million in federal funds to provide job skills training, transportation, housing and food.

The Energy Assistance Program distributed \$21.4 million to 131,000 eligible low-income families to help pay their home heating costs.

The Refugee Resettlement Program awarded more than \$5 million in contracts to public and private agencies for social services and targeted assistance for about 1200 refugees.

### **Adult Protective Services**

Services to protect older adults and those unable to care for themselves will be transferred to DHR's Division of Aging Services effective July 1, 2004. APS staff will continue to be housed in local DFCS offices for the time being and will provide adult protective services exclusively.